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TO THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA

A REPLY FROM OXFORD TO THE GERMAN ADDRESS TO EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

SECOND IMPRESSION

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NOTE.—The writers of this paper have of set purpose omitted all reference to the details of diplomatic negotiations and to the question of the neutrality of Belgium, since these have been specially dealt with in the Reply issued by the Archbishops.

Nor did it fall within their aim to discuss the allegation of 'unnameable horrors' or 'cruelties and shamelessness' practised on 'Germans living peaceably abroad' (p. 20, l. 36 *infra*). They know that nothing has happened in England even remotely corresponding to such language, and it does not seem to them likely (in the absence of evidence) to be much less grotesquely unreal in reference to Belgium. In any case the savage reprisals against the civil population of Belgian towns and villages are in their judgement more reprehensible and more symptomatic of the real temper of the nation responsible for them, just because there seems every reason to believe that they were carried out under orders of competent authority.

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Our attention has been drawn to a document which we understand is being circulated especially in America, signed by a group of German theologians and addressed 'To the Evangelical Christians Abroad'[1]. This document gives an account of the origin of the war as it is seen from the German side; it lays stress upon the peaceful aims of the German people and upon the disastrous consequences which must follow from the present conflict, especially for the cause of Christian Missions; and then it throws the blame for these consequences on other nations than Germany, who is emphatically declared to be guiltless.

We hasten to express our belief in the sincerity and good faith of these protestations and disclaimers so far as they relate to the motives of those by whom the document has been signed. We recognise the names as those of eminent teachers and ministers of religion, who have shown their own deep interest in Missions, and who have taken an active part in the efforts that have been made to cultivate a better understanding and better relations between religious people on both sides of the North Sea. We gratefully acknowledge the help which many of the signatories have given in our own Missionary Conferences and in the prosecution of other good causes. Some of us are specially bound to individuals

[1] For this document we are indebted to the courtesy of the *Westminster Gazette*, in which paper the greater part of it was published on Sept. 9, 1914. It will be found printed in full at the end of our reply, p. 19, *infra*.

on the list by personal ties of deep regard and admiration. Therefore we do our best to examine, with the self-restraint and effort at impartiality which befits those whose business it is to sift evidence and to look below facts for their causes, the points emphasized or indicated by the signatories.

1. Is it true that for forty-three years the German people 'has maintained peace' (p. 19, l. 19)?

It is true in the letter, but it is not true in the spirit.

If instead of a period of forty-three years we take a period of fifty years, we find that Germany or Prussia has waged three aggressive wars, each of which added new lands by conquest to the territory of Prussia or Germany. With the aggrandizement of Prussia as against the other States of Germany, outsiders are not directly concerned; but as the result of the campaigns against Denmark and France —and of the partition of Poland at an earlier date— Germany in the political sense is now in possession of districts on the north and east and south-west which are still largely Danish, Polish, or French (as the case may be) in sympathy, and cannot be called in any complete sense 'fragments' of the German 'motherland' (p. 20, l. 24). These districts return to the Reichstag no fewer than 28 members of the "protest parties": 1 Dane, 18 Poles, 9 Alsace-Lorrainers.

2. Is it true that, within the last forty-three years, 'wherever a danger of war arose in other lands, the

German nation has exerted herself to assist in removing or diminishing it ' (p. 19, l. 20) ?

It is not true, if it is meant to imply that Germany has not, on more occasions than one, intentionally run the risk of war. In 1875 she showed indications of an intention to renew the attack on France, an intention averted by the mediation of the Russian and English sovereigns with the Emperor William I. Of recent years, as the policy and tradition of the Bismarckian period faded farther and farther into the background of the past, the peril has recurred more and more insistently. The sword has been rattled in the scabbard and antagonists have been dared to move a step in answer. Now it was France that was bidden to sacrifice her Foreign Minister : now it was Russia that was ordered to drop all interest in the Austrian annexation of Bosnia. A generation ago Germany was content to protect her acquisitions and consolidate her power by a system of defensive alliances : latterly she has felt the desire to be as great on the sea as she is on the land, and has set the pace in a gigantic competition of armaments. Proposals for a suspension or diminution of shipbuilding have been made by Great Britain, but they have been made in vain. Germany claimed that she must fulfil her destiny, and has pursued unsleepingly the development of her army and her fleet. But a hegemony which rests on force and nothing else must, because there are stronger things in the world than force, sooner or later come to a disastrous end.

3. Is it true that Germany 'has not dreamed of depriving others of light and air' (p. 19, l. 24)?

It is not true, and indeed the exact opposite is true, if we correctly estimate the trend of German thought and German policy. While we recognize the real difficulty in which Germany finds herself when, like other European States, she feels the need to expand, and finds most of the available parts of the surface of the globe pre-empted by other nations, we feel that the more recent of Germany's efforts at expansion or penetration have been planned with a total disregard of the 'light and air' of the peoples concerned. For instance, her exploitation of Turkey in Europe took no account of the resolution of the Christian peoples of the Balkans to claim and secure their independence.

Such a policy is but the translation into action of doctrines which are widely preached in the German Universities. Of the existence and influence of this tendency the signatories cannot be ignorant; and we do not know whether to be more grateful for their own implicit repudiation of sympathy with it, or more astonished at their ostrich-like attitude towards a state of things so notorious. We should not in any case have held the signatories responsible for the theories of military writers like General von Bernhardi, any more than we should expect the signatories to assume on our part a necessary agreement with the views of Lord Roberts. But the matter stands differently with the teaching that is being enunciated in the name of German culture in the lecture-room, on the platform, and

in the press, by those who appear to exert most influence on the public opinion of the German educated classes. A significant change has passed, since the Franco-German War, over the German Professoriate. Then, among historians and men of science were not only apologists of Bismarck but critics: Mommsen and Virchow at Berlin represented an 'opposition' within the ranks of even Prussian learning. Nowadays the state of things is changed. The Government which nominates the professors sees to it that they shall not be politicians of too pronounced an anti-governmental type. The Social Democrats are the most numerous political party in Germany, but, numerous as they are, it is understood that no Social Democrat can aspire to a professorial chair. The Professoriate, at least in the greater Universities of northern and central Germany, is ardently Imperialistic in tone. Not all Imperialists need be of the school of von Treitschke; but Treitschke's ideals appear to be those which rule the educated Germany of to-day, and though the movement started from Berlin its dominance is no longer confined to Prussian soil. The two quotations that follow are from an eminent historian and an eminent scientist, both of Leipzig:

'Germany was now the protector and pillar of European civilization; and after bloody victories the world would be healed by being Germanized.' (Professor Karl Lamprecht; *Times*, Monday, August 31, 1914, p. 7.)

'Germany will dictate peace to the rest of Europe. . . . The principle of the absolute sovereignty of the

individual nations, which in the present European tumult has proved itself so inadequate and baneful, must be given up and replaced by a system conforming to the world's actual conditions, and especially to those political and economic relations which determine industrial and cultural progress and the common welfare.' (Professor Ostwald; *Westminster Gazette*, Friday, September 18, 1914, p. 2.)

Will the signatories still maintain their assertion that 'Germany' does not dream of 'depriving others of light and air'? Are they so certain that they themselves, rather than Professor Lamprecht and Professor Ostwald, are the true interpreters of German policy?

4. Is it true that Germany has only drawn the sword 'under the compulsion to repel a wanton attack' (p. 20, l. 4), and that the war 'has been wantonly thrust' upon her people (ibid., l. 28)?

It is not true: and the proof of its untruth emerges the more clearly as different diplomatic documents of the period immediately preceding the war come to light. Naturally we do not charge the signatories with stating the facts other than as they saw them. But they wrote, we are quite sure, without having studied at first hand any adequate collection of the evidence. They wrote, it is clear, in the early days after war broke out; and even if they were writing now it is doubtful if they would have had access to the English 'White Paper' with its 158 documents, published early in August, since we understand

that this publication is contraband in the German Empire.

But we have no need to appeal to anything that could be called a partisan presentation of the case : it is enough to say that Italy, which was bound by treaty, as a member of the Triple Alliance, to come to the assistance of her partners in the event of aggression directed against them, has declared herself neutral just because the *casus foederis* has not arisen. We may be quite sure that Germany would have publicly held Italy to her engagements, if the war had really been on Germany's part a defensive one.

5. Is it true that the war is a war of Slav against Teuton, that is, of 'Asiatic barbarism' against German culture? (Pp. 21 l. 25, 20 l. 13.)

Two months ago there were probably a good many people in England who on this head would have felt some sympathy with the German case. It has always seemed to us reasonable, in estimating German policy, to allow for the deep-seated nervousness in German minds which is the outcome of the neighbourhood on their further border of the great mysterious northern Power with its huge population and the illimitable possibilities of its future. And (while we in Oxford can never forget that one of the ablest and most distinguished of our professors is a Russian) it is likely that most Englishmen, while satisfied that there was nothing in the sphere of external politics to prevent a cordial understanding with Russia, would have felt qualms against anything which might seem to commit us to sympathy

with some features of Russian internal administration. But there are also considerations which, as between Russia and Germany, must be quite frankly and freely stated on the other side.

(*a*) Within the last twenty years Russia has made important advances towards freedom and self-government. Within the same period, can Germany point to any advance in this direction at all?

(*b*) In particular, the claim of the Poles to some measure of recognition of their distinct national life appears to be much nearer to adequate realization in Russia than in Germany.

(*c*) So far as the information at our disposal enables us to judge, the conduct of the war by Russia and by Germany respectively does not at all suggest a contrast between Asiatic barbarism and European culture.

Though Russian intellectual development has not yet reached the pitch of German intellectual development, we cherish at the same time the belief that the recent achievement of Russian literature, Russian scholarship, Russian science, Russian music, is the dawn that augurs a very brilliant and splendid noonday. And if we are to limit comparisons to actual results, then it would be open to us to contrast unfavourably the present political development of Germany with the higher political development of the countries of the West. The language habitually addressed by the German Emperor to his military forces implies an underlying temper of thought and ideals which appears to us, if by 'barbarism' is meant a backward

state of civilization, to be as 'barbarous' as anything that can be found in Russia.

6. Is it true that the war is a war against Protestantism? The Czar, they tell us, has openly proclaimed it as 'the decisive campaign against Teutonism and Protestantism' (p. 21, l. 24); and further on they themselves assert that by the war a 'simply incurable rent has been made in Teutonic Protestantism' (p. 23, l. 6).

We pass over the initial difficulty that no documentary evidence is here offered that the Czar did make any such statement at all, because we wish to come to grips with the central assertion that this war has in it a religious colour. Had not the German theologians asserted this, such an idea would never have entered our minds. In Great Britain there is not, and no one wishes that there should be, any sort of religious cleavage in the matter: Ulster Protestants and Roman Catholics from the rest of Ireland stand shoulder to shoulder in support of the British cause. In Germany itself there are 24,000,000 Roman Catholics to 40,000,000 Protestants; and even if the signatories regard the 24,000,000 of their own fellow-subjects as a negligible quantity, it still remains as strange as it is significant that they make no mention whatever of the alliance with Austria. For among the Great Powers of Europe the country with which Germany is allied is at the same time the country where the attitude of Roman Catholic Christians to Christians of other confessions is most definitely aggressive.

The charge that the war is a war against Protestantism is, as it seems to us, baseless ; and if it is baseless, it is beyond measure perilous. Have the signatories realized what the effect of raising the religious war-cry is likely to be upon the temper of their own people ? The more influential they are as leaders of religious thought, the more disastrous may be the results of this teaching. Can they be quite sure that they are not, in part at least, responsible for the *animus* which appears to have been shown throughout this campaign against the clergy and the churches of the countries which the German troops have overrun?

7. Is it true, lastly, that the war is limited on the one side to Christian combatants, while on the other side the assistance of non-Christian peoples is sought and welcomed (p. 21, l. 26) ?

With the signatories, we should have wished in the abstract that the introduction of non-Christian Powers into the war could be avoided. But the problem is a good deal less simple than the employment of words like ' pretext ' (p. 21, l. 27) and ' unscrupulously ' (ibid. l. 12) would suggest.

(*a*) In the first place the existence in the world of non-Christian Powers like China and Japan is a fact which it is useless to ignore. Christian Powers must have relations with them, and those relations have to be governed by the same codes of law and honour, of promise and fulfilment, as the relations between Christian Powers.

(*b*) Whatever can be said against the English alliance with Japan can be said with equal force against the German efforts after an alliance with

Turkey. Turkey is religiously just as much of an Asiatic Power as Japan.

(*c*) The Anglo-Japanese alliance, under the terms of which Japan is now engaged in fighting Germany in the Far East, does not in fact provide for the introduction of the Japanese forces into the European arena, and it has never been proposed to bring them there.

(*d*) At the same time Great Britain, believing that she and her allies are at war for a just cause, does not admit that that cause becomes less just in Asia or in Africa than it is in Europe. The 'terrible danger of a native rising' (p. 21, l. 17) she holds to be best obviated by a policy towards her subjects so liberal and so humane that they shall have no desire to revolt. She is proud that she can trust the loyalty of her Indian and South African peoples so utterly that the one country can be largely and the other wholly denuded of Imperial troops.

(*e*) Further, the Government of Great Britain has determined that some of her own Indian troops, and of the troops put prodigally at her disposal by the princes of India, shall be transferred to Europe, and we cannot pretend to regret its determination. It is not simply because we have here a crowning token of the true inner cohesion of the British Empire; it is rather that if we stand, as we claim to do, on behalf of right against might, of respect for the law of nations and for plighted word, and of the defence of the weak, then we can only rejoice if these Christian principles find an echo in the breast of non-Christian peoples. Our Indian fellow-

subjects, in especial, are the representatives of an ancient civilization, which we hope may the sooner be penetrated by Christian influences when we and they have marched side by side, and have faced the same dangers, and, if God will, have carried the same cause to victory.

We have tried to approach the appeal of the German theologians in the temper which recognizes points of contact as well as points of difference. It is the proper function of universities to correct the narrower outlook and enlarge the ordinary conceptions of patriotism by continual and appreciative witness to the existence and greatness of other empires and differing civilizations and alien peoples. Nor is it merely in the past that we see and acknowledge developments of national or intellectual life on other lines than our own. No student among us would wish for a moment to shut his eyes to the enormous output of the German universities in every department of scholarship, or to its real value. Just as in our theological ideals Christianity and the Catholic Church is something much greater than any merely local or sectional or national embodiment of it, since all the nations are destined to bring their glory and honour into it, so in our intellectual ideals we regard learning and civilization as a universal *civitas*, of the citizenship of which all who will are free, while no race is so small or so insignificant that it has not its own quota to contribute, its special gift which is necessary to the completeness of the whole.

Are these ideals shared by Germany ?

The experience of the last few weeks has taught us by the grimmest of all lessons that neither Christian tradition possesses any sacredness, nor supreme beauty in art any charm, nor historical records any value, to save the monuments of other than German culture from the lust of destruction which inflames the German armies in the field. The annals of the past might be ransacked without finding the story of a campaign where, in one brief month, such sinister deeds have been perpetrated as the burning of the library of Louvain University and the bombardment of the cathedral of Reims. If the fortune of war should bring, which God forbid, the tide of invasion into our own English land, the fate of the library of Louvain might be the fate also of the Bodleian. Until the saner elements of German public life can control the baser—and we have not heard of even any protest by the representatives of German art and German learning—will not the Christian scholars of other lands share our conviction that the contest in which our country has engaged is a contest on behalf of the supremest interests of Christian civilization ?

We, like the writers of this appeal, have laboured for peace, and deplore, as Christian men, the effect which the war must have upon many good causes and especially upon Christian Missions. No less than they we long for the reunion of Christians ; but it must be a union which shall unite other as well as Teutonic Christians, and which shall be so strong that those who labour for peace shall be able

to make their voices heard and respected in the councils of their nations.

DA PACEM IN DIEBVS NOSTRIS
DOMINE

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ADDRESS OF THE GERMAN THEOLOGIANS TO THE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS ABROAD

In this age of opportunity, without a parallel in history, when Christendom has been granted access to and decisive influence upon the entire non-Christian world, the Christian peoples of Europe are about to rend one another in fratricidal war.

A systematic network of lies, controlling the international telegraph service, is endeavouring in other lands to cast upon our people and its Government the guilt for the outbreak of this war, and has dared to dispute the inner right of us and our Emperor to invoke the assistance of God. The necessity is therefore laid upon us, who are known among Christians abroad as men who have worked for the propagation of the Gospel among foreign peoples and for the establishment of cultural ties and friendly relations between Germany and other Christian nations, to offer to the entire public our testimony concerning this war.

For forty-three years our people has maintained peace. Wherever a danger of war arose in other lands, our nation has exerted herself to assist in removing or diminishing it. Her ideal was peaceful work. She has contributed a worthy share to the cultural wealth of the modern world. She has not dreamed of depriving others of light and air. She desired to thrust no one from his place. In friendly competition with other peoples, she has developed the gifts which God had given her. Her industry brought her rich fruit. She won also a modest share in the task of colonization in the primitive world, and was exerting herself to

offer her contribution to the remoulding of Eastern Asia. She has left no one, who is willing to see the truth, in doubt as to her peaceful disposition. Only under the compulsion to repel a wanton attack has she now drawn the sword.

As our Government was exerting itself to localize the justifiable vengeance for an abominable royal murder, and to avoid the outbreak of war between two neighbouring Great Powers, one of them, whilst invoking the mediation of our Emperor, proceeded (in spite of its pledged word) to threaten our frontiers, and compelled us to protect our land from being ravaged by Asiatic barbarism. Then our adversaries were joined also by those who by blood and history and faith are our brothers, with whom we felt ourselves in the common world-task more closely bound than with almost any other nation. Over against a world in arms we recognize clearly that we have to defend our existence, our individuality, our culture, and our honour. No scruple holds back our enemies, where in their opinion there is a prospect, through our destruction, of seizing for themselves an economic advantage or an increase of power, a fragment of our mother-land, our colonial possessions, or our trade. We stand over against this raging of the peoples, fearless because of our trust in the holy and righteous God. Precisely because this war has been wantonly thrust upon our people, it finds us a single people, in which distinctions of race and rank, of parties and confessions, have vanished. In a holy enthusiasm, not shrinking from battle and from death, and looking to God, we are all of one mind, and prepared joyfully to stake our all for our land and our liberty.

Unnameable horrors have been committed against Germans living peaceably abroad—against women and children, against wounded and physicians—

cruelties and shamelessness such as many a heathen and Mohammedan war has not revealed. Are these the fruits, by which the non-Christian peoples are to recognize whose disciples the Christian nations are? Even the not unnatural excitement of a people, whose neutrality—already violated by our adversaries—could under the pressure of implacable necessity not be respected, affords no excuse for inhumanities, nor does it lessen the shame that such could take place in a land long ago Christianized. Into the centre of Africa the war has been unscrupulously carried, although military operations there are entirely irrelevant to its decision, and although the participation of natives, who have been pacified but a few decenniums, in a war of white against white, conjures up the terrible danger of a native rising. These primitive peoples learned to know Christianity as the religion of love and peace as opposed to racial feuds and the cruelties of their chiefs. Now they are being led in arms against one another by the peoples who brought them this Gospel. Thus flourishing Mission-fields are being trampled in ruin.

Into the war which the Czar has openly proclaimed as the decisive campaign against Teutonism and Protestantism, heathen Japan is now also called under the pretext of an alliance. The Mission-fields which the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh indicated as the most important in the present day—mid-Africa, with its rivalry between Christendom and Islam for the black races, and Eastern Asia remoulding its life—are now becoming the scenes of embittered struggles between peoples who bore in a special degree the responsibility for the fulfilment of the Great Commission in these lands.

Our Christian friends abroad know how joyfully we German Christians greeted the fellowship in

faith and service which the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference left as a sacred legacy to Protestant Christendom ; they know also how we have, to the best of our ability, co-operated in order that among the Christian nations, with their competing political and economic interests, there should arise a Christianity united and joyous in the recognition of the task entrusted to it by God. It was also to us a matter of conscience to remove by every means political misunderstandings and ill-feelings and to assist in bringing about friendly relations between the nations. We have now to endure the taunt that we have believed in the power of the Christian faith to conquer the wickedness of those who are seeking war, and we encounter the reproach that our efforts for peace have only served to conceal from our people the true attitude of their enemies. Nevertheless, we do not regret that we have thus endeavoured to promote peace. Our people could not enter into this struggle with so clear a conscience if leading men of its ecclesiastical, scientific, and commercial life had not in such manifold ways exerted themselves to make this fratricidal strife impossible.

Not for the sake of our people, whose sword is bright and keen—for the sake of the unique world-task of the Christian peoples in the decisive hour of the world-Mission, we now address ourselves to the evangelical Christians abroad in neutral and inimical lands.

We were hoping that through God there should arise from the responsibility of the hour a stream of new life for the Christian peoples. Already we were able to trace in our German Churches the powerful effects of this blessing, and the fellowship with the Christians of other lands in obedience to the universal commission of Jesus was to us a service of sacred joy.

If this fellowship is now irreparably destroyed ;
if the peoples among whom missions and brotherly love had begun to be a power lapse into savagery in murderous war through hate and bitterness ;
if a simply incurable rent has been made in Teutonic Protestantism ;
if Christian Europe forfeits a notable portion of her position in the world ;
if the sacred springs from which her peoples should derive their own life and should offer it to others are corrupted and choked ;

the guilt of this rests, this we hereby declare before our Christian brethren of other lands with calm certainty, not on our people. We know full well, that through this sanguinary judgement God is also calling our nation to repentance, and we rejoice that she is hearing His holy voice and turning to Him. But in this we know that we are at one with all the Christians among our people, that we can and must repudiate on their behalf and on behalf of their Government the responsibility for the terrible crime of this war and all its consequences for the development of the Kingdom of God on earth. With the deepest conviction we must attribute it to those who have long secretly and cunningly been spinning a web of conspiracy against Germany, which now they have flung over us in order to strangle us therein.

We direct our appeal to the conscience of our Christian brethren in other lands, and press upon them the question, what God now requires of them, and what can and must take place, in order that, through blindness and unscrupulousness in God's great hour of the missionary enterprise, Christendom shall not be robbed of its power and of its right to serve as His messenger to non-Christian humanity.

The Holy God carries on His work to its goal, even through the storm and horror of war, and permits no human wickedness to defeat His purpose. Therefore we come before Him with the prayer :

'Hallowed be Thy Name ;
Thy Kingdom come ;
Thy Will be done.'

Missionsdirektor Lic. **K. Axenfeld** (Berlin).

Professor Dr. med. **Th. Axenfeld** (Freiburg).

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